

Stearns Iron-Front Building
1007 East Main Street
Richmond
Virginia

HABS No. VA-847 HABS
VA
44-RICH
96

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. VA-847

STEARNS IRON-FRONT BUILDING

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Location: 1007 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia.

Present Owner: Ten O Seven, Inc., c/o Mitchell, Wiggins and Company, P. O. Box 1580, Richmond, Virginia.

Present Occupant: Mitchell, Wiggins and Company. CPA
(Litho Plate Service, on second floor with separate entrance.)

Present Use: Offices.

Statement of Significance: The Stearns Iron-front Building, erected in 1866 with ironwork from Hayward, Bartlett of Baltimore, is a splendid example of a cast-iron row and is one of the most important examples of surviving Richmond commercial buildings from the latter part of the nineteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1865 Franklin Stearns purchased 1007-1013 East Main Street from the President and Directors of the Farmer's Bank for \$32,100, being a parcel of land "whereon the banking house of (the Farmer's Bank) recently stood." (D.B. 82B, 434).

1869 Stearns building erected and occupied (Richmond City Directories).

1870-post 1881 Circuit Court for City of Richmond met in 1007 East Main Street (Richmond City Directories).

1888 Franklin Stearns (1815-1888) died and, by will, left the property with "my four tenement store houses or block of buildings, with the land on which they stand, and the appurtenances thereto belonging, situated on the south side of Main Street, between 10th and 11th Streets ... and nearly opposite the building used by the United States Government as a Post Office and Custom House" in trust for his four grandchildren (Chancery Court, Book 4, 98).

1923 John P. Leary and Daniel Grinnan, Special Commissioners in the Chancery Court suit of Stearns vs. Rixey et al. sold

1007 East Main Street to American Office Buildings Corporation (D.B. 301A, 68).

1941 Chelsea-Richmond Corporation purchased 1007 East Main Street for \$25,000 from American Office Building Corporation (D.B. 427C, 141).

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1956 Laburnum Realty Corporation purchased 1007 East Main Street from Chelsea-Richmond Corporation (D.B. 571C, 76) for \$37,500.

1967 Ten O Seven, Inc., purchased 1007 East Main Street from Laburnum Realty Corporation for \$40,000 (tax records, Richmond City Hall).

2. Date of erection: circa 1868.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Original plans, etc.: Unknown.
5. Alterations and additions: See Part II.
6. Important old views: Unknown.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Throughout its history, the Stearns Building has contained the quarters of many well-known Richmond stores and lawyers' offices.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Deed books and tax assessor records.
2. Secondary and published sources: None.

Prepared by J. R. Fishburne
Research Historian
18 April 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Stearns Iron-front Building stands as probably the largest and finest example of its

type in Richmond. Though architecturally inspired by the Renaissance palaces of Venice, the building makes maximum use of its modern material by having a minimum proportion of solid to void. The building is in reality a glass-fronted structure with the thinnest yet richest embellishments acting as the supports.

2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Entire facade approximately 107 feet wide; building approximately 64 feet deep; 14 bays wide, four stories high.
2. Foundations: Brick, common bond.
3. Wall construction: Cast-iron facade; partition walls between adjoining structures and between sections of the building itself, and rear wall, brick laid in common bond. West wall is stuccoed above adjoining building.
4. Framing: Heavy, closely spaced joists set in brick walls.
5. Porches: None.
6. Chimneys: Chimney flues set in partition walls with short undecorated chimneys above. Chimneys serve no architectural function as they are not visible from the street.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The two original exterior sets of doors survive on the facade in the fourth and tenth bay from the west with the original architectural decoration around them intact. This consists of two engaged Corinthian columns framing an arch outlined by a rounded molding embellished by a spiraling vine. The arch is topped by a deeply molded keystone decorated with a garland and rosebud. The doors themselves are wooden, double doors in each case, having in each door a long glass panel above a nearly square one. The doors are topped by a glazed semi-circular transom. The original doorways to the individual shopfronts have either been removed or significantly altered. The fronts to 1009 and 1013, though altered, give some idea of how the street level bay probably appeared, with a central doorway flanked by windows. Separating all of the ground floor bays, except where removed, are engaged Corinthian columns supporting a Corinthian

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entablature. Other doorways in the building include the functionally designed loading dock doorways on the ground floor of the rear of the building.

- b. Windows: The windows throughout the facade are treated uniformly. The engaged Corinthian columns which frame each window stand on a pedestal base which also acts as an engaged balustrade beneath the windows. This engaged balustrade is embellished and decorated with panels and central roundels beneath each window. Each of the semi-circular arched windows is surrounded by a round molding decorated by a spiraling vine as in the doorways. The windows are crowned also by a garland and rosebud decorated keystone. All of the windows survive with the original arrangement of two-over-two sash which takes no decorative advantage of the arched tops of the windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The asphalt covered roof of the building gently slopes toward the rear to promote drainage. The two-story-on-basement rear section has a similar roof treatment as the front part.
- b. Cornice: The facade of the building is crowned by a deep Italianate entablature. Directly beneath the entablature and supported by the engaged Corinthian columns of the fourth floor is a decorative band featuring intertwined vines. The architrave of the entablature is standard. Extending from beneath the cornice through the frieze are large, highly ornate brackets. The spaces between the brackets in the frieze are decorated with roundels with rosettes.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The first floors of each section of the building have all been greatly altered from their original form.
- b. Second floor: The second floor of each section contained finished rooms or offices in the front portion of the building with large unfinished storeroom space in the rear section.
- c. Third and fourth floors: The third and fourth floors are finished as offices with a room on the front and rear of the building and service area between.

2. Stairways: Each of the two stairways from the street to the second floor is enclosed on both sides and has iron brackets supporting the handrails. Both stairways ascend to the second floor in one run. From the second floor to the upper stories each section of the building has its own balustraded stairway.
3. Flooring: The original floors where they survive are random width pine floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: In office sections, plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: Where originals survive they are typical four-panel doors of the period surrounded by simple architraves. Doors are pine.
6. Decorative features and trim: No outstanding interior decorative features.
7. Notable hardware: Original hardware is typical of the period.
8. Lighting: Originally gas, now electric throughout.
9. Heating: Originally heated by open fires, most original mantels have been removed. Heated at present by oil fired furnaces.

D. Site:

General setting and orientation: Building is located on the south side of lower Main Street across from the Customs House. The building finss up its entire lot and is adjoined by architecturally sympathetic structures.

Prepared by Calder C. Loth
Architectural Historian
Virginia Historic Landmarks
Commission
18 April 1969

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the Richmond Photo-Data Project, undertaken in 1967 by HABS in cooperation with the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. During the period from July, 1967 to October, 1969, records were made of 11 historic structures in Richmond. The project primarily recorded examples of the cast-iron commercial architecture for which the city is known, though other building types are also included.

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The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey. James W. Moody, Jr., Executive Director, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, directed the operation in Richmond. Professor Paul Delaney of the University of Virginia School of Architecture assisted in the selection of subjects covered. Historical and architectural data were furnished by Messrs. Tucker Hill and Calder Loth, Architectural Historians of the Commission's staff. Photographer was Edward F. Heite, also on the staff of the Commission.

STEARNS IRON-FRONT BUILDING

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Location: 1009 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia.

Present Owner: Estate of Franklin Stearns, c/o First and Merchants National Bank, Richmond, Virginia.

Present Occupant: Pollard and Bagby, Inc., realtors.

Present Use: Office.

Statement of Significance: The Stearns Iron-front Building, erected in 1866 with ironwork from Hayward, Bartlett of Baltimore, is a splendid example of a cast-iron row and is one of the most important examples of surviving Richmond commercial buildings from the latter part of the nineteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1865 Franklin Stearns purchased 1007-1013 East Main Street from the President and Directors of the Farmer's Bank for \$32,100, being a parcel of land "whereon the banking house of (the Farmer's Bank) recently stood." (D.B. 82B, 434).

1869 Stearns building erected and occupied (Richmond City Directories).

1888 Franklin Stearns (1815-1888) died and, by will, left the property with "my four tenement store houses or block of buildings" in trust for his four grandchildren (Chancery Court, Book 4, 98).

1922 Chancery Court of Richmond ruled that American Mortgage Corporation would be allowed to purchase 1007 and 1009 East Main Street for \$170,000.

1924 American Mortgage Corporation sold 1009 East Main Street to Pollard and Bagby, Incorporated (Wilkinson vs. Chapin, Chancery Court records).

1933 1009 East Main Street damaged by fire.

1934 Deed of Quit Claim with Pollard and Bagby conveying 44 Rich
1009 East Main Street to First and Merchants National Bank 96
of Richmond, Trustees for Franklin Stearns estate (D.B.
394D, 242).

1945-present Pollard and Bagby, Incorporated, lease I009
East Main Street from First and Merchants National Bank.

2. Date of erection: circa 1868.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Original plans: Unknown.
5. Alterations and additions: See Part II.
6. Important old views: Unknown.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Throughout its history, the Stearns Building has contained the quarters of many well-known Richmond stores and lawyers' offices.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Deed books and tax assessor records in Richmond City Hall.
2. Secondary and published sources: None.

Prepared by J. R. Fishburne
Research Historian
18 April 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

See Part II, Architectural Information, Stearns Iron-Front Building, 1007 East Main Street.

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STEARNS IRON-FRONT BUILDING

VA
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Location: 1011 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia.

Present Owner: Estate of Franklin Stearns, c/o First and Merchants National Bank, Richmond, Virginia.

Present Occupant: Wades' Restaurant.

Present Use: Restaurant.

Statement of Significance: The Stearns Iron-front Building, erected in 1866 with ironwork from Hayward, Bartlett of Baltimore, is a splendid example of a cast-iron row and is one of the most important examples of surviving Richmond commercial buildings from the latter part of the nineteenth century.

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1869 Stearns building erected and occupied (Richmond City Directories).

1888 Franklin Stearns (1815-1888) died and, by will, left the property with "my four tenement store houses or block of buildings" in trust for his four grandchildren (Chancery Court, Book 4, 98).

1920 John P. Leary and Daniel Grinnan, special commissioners, permitted to sell 1011 East Main Street.

1922 Special commissioners sold 1011 to Real Estate Holding Company (Wilkinson vs. Chapin, Chancery Court records).

1923 Real Estate Holding Corporation sold 1011 East Main Street to the E. B. Taylor Company (D.B. 289B, 236).

1927 The E. B. Taylor Company sold 1011 East Main Street to John P. Leary and Daniel Grinnan, Trustees, American Bank and Trust Company (D.B. 347B, 73). 44-RICH

1933 First and Merchants made sub-trustees in place of American Bank and Trust. 96.

2. Date of erection: circa 1868.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Original plans: Unknown.
5. Alterations and additions: See Part II.
6. Important old views: Unknown.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

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2. Secondary and published sources: None.

Prepared by J. R. Fishburne
Research Historian
18 April 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

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Location: 1013 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Morton G. Thalhimer, Inc.

Present Use: Office.

Statement of
Significance: The Stearns Iron-front Building, erected in 1866 with ironwork from Hayward, Bartlett of Baltimore, is a splendid example of a cast-iron row and is one of the most important examples of surviving Richmond commercial buildings from the latter part of the nineteenth century.

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1920 John P. Leary and Daniel Grinnan, special commissioners, permitted to sell 1013 East Main Street.

1922 Special Commissioners sold 1013 to Real Estate Holding Company (Wilkinson vs. Chapin, Chancery Court records).

1926 Real Estate Holding Company sold 1013 to Morton G. Thalhimer, Inc., (D.B. 330D, 302). The same year Morton G. Thalhimer, Inc., sold the property to John P. Leary and Daniel Grinnan (D.B. 330D, 307). Morton G. Thalhimer, Inc., has owned the property since that time.

2. Date of erection: circa 1868.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Original plans: Unknown.
5. Alterations and additions: See Part II.
6. Important old views: Unknown.

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B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

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